

Shattering Fire

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Summary: A prelude to Halo: When Marines meet Mercenaries. Ehren returns to Triad to find it under attack by Covenant forces.

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A/N: Okay I wrote this as a short story for creative writing. It takes place a few years before Halo: When Marines Meet Mercenaries. I do not own Star Wars or Halo, yada yada yada. Hope you enjoy it!

Shattering Fire

Triad. Not much was known about the backwater planet. Even its existence was a closely guarded secret; locked up in the highest security encryptions the Empire could offer. For on this planet were the resources and factories necessary for making the most valuable metal in the galaxy, an indestructible alloy known as Quantum Crystalline Armor (QCA).

However this all changed when an ambitious mercenary and his band were forced to make a random jump into hyperspace and stumbled upon the hidden planet. His large gang easily dominated the small Imperial task force defending the planet. After ruling the planet for several months the man decided that he was more cut out for the military than the government and appointed a ruler to handle the economy while he hired out his skills to fill the currently poor world's coffers.

This mercenary had brought with him his wife. She was a beautiful Twilek from Ryloth, who was one of the few who knew the man's dark past. The two longed for a child, but couldn't bear any, and hope was all but lost that one of the greatest mercenaries in history would have an heir.

Night had fallen on the lavish apartment of the admiral. The dimly

lit room was neat and orderly, there was very little evidence that the room was lived in at all. A Twilek, dressed only in a nightgown, stood by the transparisteel window gazing at Triad's second moon.

The silhouette of a large man stood framed in the doorway. The figure cautiously approached his wife, as though afraid she might shatter like ice dropped into a fire. He was close enough to feel the heat from her slender pale green body before he managed to speak.

"What did the doctor say?" he whispered, no more than a breath. The woman turned slowly, revealing her eyes, which were a dazzling pink in her joy.

"Ehren, we're going to have a baby!" Thyra couldn't sound happier.

Laughing hard enough to bring down the roof, the mercenary swept his wife up into his powerful arms, planted a kiss on her parted lips, and hugged her tight. Putting her down, he straitened his uniform and looked out the window, his emerald eyes suddenly somber, his flaming hair, cut Mandalorian style, glistening in the moonlight.

"What is it?" asked Thyra. "Why are you sad Ehren? This is what we always dreamed of."

Turning towards her Ehren cleared his throat and began his prepared speech, "There is a planet in civil war, my love, and those rebelling have pleaded that we assist them. They have few weapons and very little in the way of necessities. They can't promise us many credits. However, I have a duty to help the unfortunate, and under Trandoshan rule they were treated unjustly. We will be shipping out in six units."

He couldn't meet those downcast eyes any longer, turning again to the window, he added, "We shouldn't be gone long, a month, if they don't surrender the moment we appear in-system."

Thyra turned from him, "I understand."

"Thryaâ€¦ I'm sorry, I didn't mean to put a shadow over the fact that finally we shall have a child, but that's the life I've chosen. I'm a mercenary, I don't have regular hours." Ehren smiled. "And besides, you know how much I hate Trandoshans."

She turned, smiled, and gave him a peck on the cheek. "Yes, I know how much you hate Trandoshans," the Twilek said as she traced a scar that ran down his cheek, a memento of how close her husband had come to decapitation via vibroblade. "I have a trip to make anyway. There is that one town that was hit by a earthquake and half of it was leveled. I'm going to be leaving next week to provide support and, honestly, because I'm expected to go. You wouldn't be seeing much of me anyway."

"Well, then why were you mad at me in the first place? It's not like we never see each otherâ€¦" just close to never," Ehren joked as he stroked Thyra's lekku. "The briefing is in a few units, don't wait up."

"I never do," replied the woman as she opened the door for her

husband, who gave her a quick kiss and walked down the well-lit hallway.

"Well, that was a good fight," grinned Major Melchior Sunderman, one of Ehren's aides and a personal friend, as he wiped green blood off the butt of his rifle. "Should have left your helmet on, though, Admiral."

"What? And miss getting my eye clawed out by a Trandoshan? Not on your life," laughed Ehren as the Two-One-Bee medical droids applied a temporary patch over the grisly wound. "I didn't take it off, by the way, the clamps failed and it _fell_ off."

"_The Trandoshan's claws must have had poison on them, sir,_" a Two-One-Bee said in its hollow voice. "_You're going to need a photoceptor replacement. We have one that will fit snugly into your eye socket and won't extend farther than that. The only question is: what color?_"

"Green will be fine," Ehren said, tracing the three scars that ran from his forehead to his jaw. "My wife's gonna kill me."

"Nonsense," reprimanded Melchior. "The blaster she'll be holding will kill you."

"Either way, same outcome," Ehren glanced around the medical room. "Where's Commander Brinks?"

"Bacta dip."

"Again? What was it this time?"

"Sprung a trap, one that included multiple rocket launchers."

"If he didn't wear QCA he would have died a long time ago."

"_Major, if you don't mind, the Admiral needs his rest,_" interrupted the medical droid. "_Unless you have something important to say you might as well leave._"

"Well I do have some important information: The Trandoshans have surrendered!" announced the Major.

"Good, now get any and all Trandoshans off this rock and ship them back to their godforsaken planet," grumbled Ehren. "Then we can go home."

Back on Triad it was business as usual for the men and women of the Triad Defense Core. The normal patrols had been set up, superior officers scheduled drills, and the sentries posted on CommSat008 were bored as hell. Even though the planet was unknown to anyone other than the mercenaries and the dead Ehren had been vehement about setting up patrols and keeping a constant watch for any incoming spacecraft. However no one truly expected that a ship of any kind would wander in-system.

Lieutenant Tebain was shaken awake by a dull repeating beep that was issuing from his console. A red light was flashing on his screen next to Navbeacon1703. "Has to be a glitch," Tebain thought as he clicked on the Navbeacon's icon.

A wave of data swarmed up the Lieutenant's console, describing a small unit that had just dropped out of hyperspace. There were no lifeforms aboard, but the unit had begun emitting radar and microwaves that were commonly associated with scanning equipment. There was no doubt that it was a drone used for navigating and mapping safe hyperspace passages, but what was intriguing about this drone was that it had appeared coming out of the Unknown Regions. A long list of numbers showed its current position.

His face grim, Tebain quickly followed procedure and contacted High Command. A small holographic image of the TDC Fleet Commander hovered above the Lieutenant's desk. The clean gray uniform seemed to emphasize the Commander's large stomach, his squat build, and the ridiculous handlebar mustache that gave everyone a grin.

A grin Tebain now repressed as he sat up to face the image, "Commander Melchett, a drone dropped out of hyperspace coming from the Unknown Regions. As it is protocol, I suggest we send a patrol squadron to investigate and contact the Admiral."

"Ah, well done Lieutenant," nodded the Commander, "you send out the patrol, and I'll inform the Admiral immediately."

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, and Lieutenant?"

"Sir?"

"Is my mustache bushy enough? You see there's this pretty little captain down at the club, so anything terrible about my appearance?"

"You look very handsome, Sir," responded Tebain dully as he forced himself to not roll his eyes. The Commander flushed with pleasure.

"Good, carry on."

The hologram winked out as the Commander cut the transmission. Commander Melchett was universally thought of as mad, and many a raw recruit had made the mistake of giving him an honest answer. They were quickly drummed out of the service or court marshaled.

Sighing, Lieutenant Tremain turned back to the console and began issuing orders.

"Shipmaster, the drone has discovered another planet. From the scans it appears to be populated with more of the humans," muttered an Elite, who clicked his mandibles, apparently disgusted of the fact that humans were infesting yet another planet. "It appears they have only a few orbiting stations that may be defended, and an insignificant battle fleet. What are your orders?"

The Shipmaster hesitated long enough to give the minor prophet who hovered slightly above the eight-foot tall Elite's right shoulder a glance. With a wave of his thin fingers the prophet gave the Shipmaster the freedom of choice, which was acknowledged with a nod.

"Proceed with the attack, and another victory for the glorious forces of the Covenant!"

Thyra stood on a podium waiting for the crowd to settle down. Surrounding her was the flattened ruins of a city, completely destroyed by a sudden earthquake. It was sobering to see the survivors and relief personnel struggling to care for the injured, bury the dead, and find the missing. However somehow a rumor had started that Triad was under attack, which made the people restless. "I'm going to start this speech whether they are listening or not," she muttered to herself as she turned on the voice amplifier.

"Friends, we are here, in the formerly illustrious city of Dumak, because a tragedy has occurred. However there is no doubt that the city will return to its former glory, and life will continue as it did before the earthquake. We must look to the future to help us through the tough times ahead."

A soft whine cut through her words, but it was hardly noticeable.

"I promise that the government will do everything in its power to help, and when our brave men and women of the Iron Wolf Mercenaries return they will switch from taking life to serving it as they too help rebuild this city," Thyra paused as the whine increased in volume dramatically. A security official, pale with disturbing news, step forward and whispered it in her ear. It took a moment for Thyra to compose herself, but she straightened and said silently, "Do not panic, but I have just received wordâ€¦ That Triad is under attack. Please get in your vehicles and calmly go to the nearest defense station or shielded city. Again, Triad is under attack. Go to the nearest defense station or shielded city."

The whine rose to a roar as eight purple airspeeders shot overhead, their two wings tipped with bulbous engines that trailed blue fire. The crowd became a mob as people ran for cover when the Banshees turned and dove at the populace, blue-white plasma raining death and destruction. Watching one of the ships in particular as it turned and faced directly toward her, Thyra stood, frozen in fear. As the plasma blobs traced closer towards her, igniting people on fire and burning bloody holes through chests, Thyra couldn't help thinking, "At least I hadn't chosen a color for the baby's room yet." Blue fire engulfed the twilek, sending her shattered body tumbling off the dais and onto the scorched ground below.

"Someone is facing an early retirement for this," grated Ehren as he watched a Covenant ship open up on the undefended surface of Triad, explosions throwing clouds of debris hundreds of feet in the air. On the bridge of the Eclipse-class Star Destroyer Iron Wolf Ehren watched as his beloved world went up in flame. The comm. pinged and a life-sized image of Commander Melchett appeared in front of Admiral Varick. He appeared blissfully unaware of anything going wrong.

"Admiral, we recently got news of a drone that came out of hyperspace" "Aaugh," Melchett choked, as though strangled by an unseen hand.

"Commander," Ehren started coldly, his face showing no trace of

emotion or humanity, "you managed to promote yourself to that level through cheating and forging false records of bravado and skill. At the time I did not expose you because I simply had better things to do and you managed to keep the TDC in line enough for me to see you as a temporary replacement for a worthy commander." Melchett clawed at his throat, trying to pry the invisible vise that clamped his neck off. "You have failed me, Commander, for the last time."

The former Commander fell to the ground, dead. Ehren relaxed visibly, "Captain Yevena, you are the Commander now." He indicated a tall, proud woman who had wandered into the hologram after Melchett had died.

"Yes, Sir!" She smartly saluted as Ehren killed the transmission.

"Captain Mendoza," demanded Ehren as he turned to face the thin, pale man whose dark black hair and eyes contrasted sharply with his white skin, "sound the alarm, let's drive this scum from our planet." He paused, turning back to the viewport, reaching out with the force to attempt to feel whether or not Thyra was alive, and succeeded just in time to feel her fire shattered. Tears stung his eyes as Ehren turned back to Mendoza. "Kill them all."

Ehren turned away from the viewport and marched off the bridge, his boots beating a rhythm on the cool metal, the same rhythm made by the hooves of the fourth horseman. Dark energies he had bound up inside himself were released, and Ehren was ready to make his war.

A/N: Sorry about the lack of a good action scene, but I was on a deadline. I'll add to it and expand it later if I can.

End
file.